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## News Release

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### **Assistant Secretary Strickland, NPS Director Jarvis and Administration Officials Host *America's Great Outdoors* Listening Session in Asheville**

**Asheville, NC** — Fish and Wildlife and Parks Assistant Secretary Tom Strickland, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis and USDA Senior Advisor for Environment and Climate Robert Bonnie today hosted a public listening session as part of President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors* initiative to develop a conservation agenda worthy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Under the initiative, the Administration is reaching out to communities across the country to hear good ideas about conservation and to learn about the efforts that ordinary Americans are making to conserve our land, water and wildlife.

"What makes this region so special is not only its natural beauty, but also the commitment shown by the local community and visitors to preserve and protect the places they call home," Strickland said. "From the Great Smoky Mountains to the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Southeast region offers many recreational opportunities for all to enjoy. We must take advantage of these opportunities to promote conservation and reconnect people, especially our youth, to the great outdoors."

"Today, new voices joined a national dialogue to reinvigorate America's conservation ethic and strengthen the bonds that connect people to places," Jarvis said. "We benefitted from the voices of experience, of people who love Asheville and the Blue Ridge and have raised their families here for generations, and from the voices of young people whose fresh perspectives and vigor will insure the future of their heritage and this irreplaceable American landscape."

"This America's Great Outdoors listening session provides the Administration with an opportunity to learn from citizens in North Carolina on approaches that are working to conserve our natural heritage and reconnect Americans to the outdoors," said Robert Bonnie, Senior Advisor at USDA. "We look forward to hearing how experiences in North Carolina can help us build a new agenda for conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

President Obama inaugurated the *America's Great Outdoors* Initiative at a White House Conference held at the Department of the Interior in April. The conference brought together leaders from communities across the country that are working to protect their outdoor spaces and focused on developing and supporting innovative ideas for improving conservation and recreation at the local level.

For more information on the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, please visit:  
<http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors>.

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